DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 469 522 SO 034 266

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TITLE	Gold Rush. Fourth Grade Activity. Schools of California Online Resources for Education (SCORE): Connecting California's Classrooms to the World.
INSTITUTION	San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, CA.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	10p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Schools of California Online Resources for Education, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, 601 North East Street, San Bernardino, CA 92410-3093. E-mail: webmaster@score.rims.k12.ca.us; Web site: http://score.rims.k12.ca.us.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Learner (051) -- Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Evaluation Criteria; Grade 4; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Intermediate Grades; Language Arts; Role Playing; *Social Studies; Special Needs Students; *State History; Student Research; United States History; *Urban Planning; Writing Exercises
IDENTIFIERS	*California Gold Rush

ABSTRACT

In 1875, a man fishing in the isolated Trout River of California discovered several large gold nuggets. This lesson plan asks fourth-grade students to develop a plan to avoid another 1849 gold rush. The plan is to design a new town while considering transportation, housing, food and goods for the miners, and the preservation of the area's beautiful environment. The lesson plan states that five committees are to be formed for the new town and each of the four area towns (Sleepyville, Deer Valley, Pinetown, and Quiet Gulch). The plans must contain information about the 1849 gold rush. The lesson plan describes the task; delineates the process; lists resources; gives learning advice; discusses evaluation criteria and reflection; and provides a conclusion. The teacher notes section presents a grade level; addresses history/social science standards and lesson length; notes materials needed; presents interdisciplinary connections for language arts (reading comprehension, writing strategies, and listening and speaking strategies); lists print and media resources; discusses evaluation rubrics; and adaptations for special needs students. (BT)

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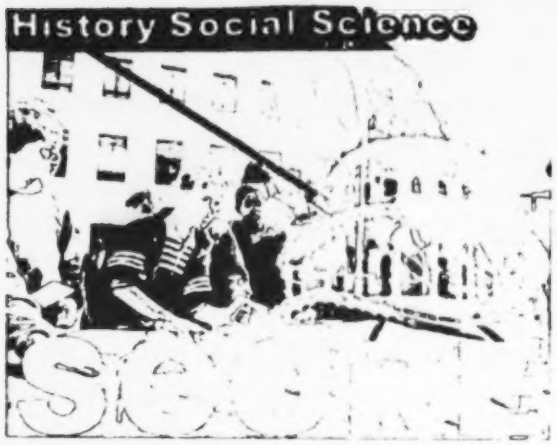

Schools of California Online Resources for Education (SCORE): Connecting California's Classrooms to the World

Gold Rush

Fourth Grade Activity
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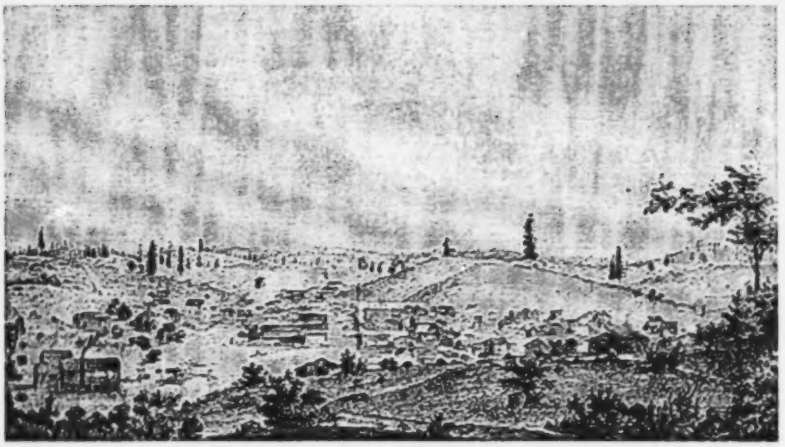

Gold Rush

The year is 1875. A man fishing in the isolated Trout River of California has just discovered several large gold nuggets. He has reported his findings to the United States government officials. The officials are worried about another Gold Rush like the one in 1849, which was uncontrolled and led to many problems.

They decide to have a competition. The small towns of Sleepyville, Deer Valley, Pinetown and Quiet Gulch all lie along the Trout River. The government offers a generous amount of the tax money that the miners will pay to the town that comes up with the best plan for managing the crowds that will come to the area once the discovery is announced. That town will be designated as the official Boom Town of 1875.

Each town is asked to consider transportation, housing, and providing food and goods for the

arriving miners. Preserving the area's beautiful environment is also important to the people living there, so the plans will have to assure residents that nothing will be changed. Keeping law and order in the area is also an important issue to consider.

A committee from each town will be asked to present their findings to a United States government panel, who will decide where the Boom Town will be established.

The Task

Committees will be formed from each of the four towns: Sleepyville, Deer Valley, Pinetown or Quiet Gulch. It will be each committee's job to come up with a plan that will successfully solve the problems of the last Gold Rush. In order to do this, you must first find the following information about the Gold Rush of 1849:

- How did the miners reach the gold fields? What problems did this trip cause?
- What did the miners do once they reached the fields?
- What kinds of equipment did they need for mining? What other goods did they need?
- Were there any problems caused by these needs? How did they get the supplies that they needed?
- Did any of the mining cause harm to the environment?
- What kind of problems arose in the mining towns before there were laws? What laws were needed?

Once you have answers to these questions, you will come up with solutions to each of the problems.

Each town's committee must write a convincing argument to present to the U.S. government panel, which will be composed of students or adults who are not part of your class. Your presentations will let them

know how you intend to solve each of the problems of the past Gold Rush. They will then select the town with the best plan.

In choosing the best plan, the government panel will consider the following issues:

- Have the problems of reaching the gold fields been handled well?
- Have provisions been made for miners to purchase mining supplies as well as food and other essentials?
- Are the plans for housing adequate for all of the miners?
- Has careful thought been given to the problem of law and order?
- Has the committee presented ideas for protecting the environment?

The Process

Your class will divide into five groups: one for each of the four towns and one for the government committee who will make the decision.

Each town's group will need to make a chart showing each of the following items in a column across the top: transportation to the fields, mining materials, food and other goods, and laws. In the first row under these headings, you will write how these matters were handled in 1849 and the problems that were caused by each. In the second row, list how you think these needs will be met in this 1875 Gold Rush in order to solve the problems of the last one.

It may also be valuable to read about the Gold Rush in Australia to see how they improved on some of the problems of the 1849 California Gold Rush.

You will also need to think about the events that have taken place in the years since the last California Gold Rush. Are there any new kinds of transportation? Have there been changes in the government in

California? Will these affect the new Gold Rush?

Make your charts clear and use them as tools to make your presentations to the government panel. They will decide on the best plan based on the committee that has carefully thought out all of the problems and come up with good solutions.

Resources

Your Social Studies textbook will tell you about the problems of the 1849 Gold Rush. There are many books that you will be able to find in the library that will also help.

There are also quite a few Internet sites that will give you valuable information about the last Gold Rush and gold mining. Here are a few:

A Brief History of California's Gold
http://www.goldfever.com/goldfever/ghistory.htm#fortune

The California Gold Country: Highway 49 Revisited
http://www.malakoff.com/gorh.htm

Sacramento Bee Gold Rush Series
http://www.calgoldrush.com/

Discovery of Gold in California by John Sutter

http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist2/gold.html

PBS Documentary: The Gold Rush
http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/home.html

Oakland Museum Exhibit: Gold Fever!
http://www.museumca.org/goldrush.html

You might also want to look at this site:

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Driving the Last Spike
http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist1/rail.html

Learning Advice

Within your group, have each member research one of the issues to be evaluated--mining tools, transportation, etc. It is a good idea to take notes on index cards as you work, and then share what you have found before entering it on your chart. Once you have entered all of your information on the chart, practice your presentation to the panel. Have all group members give their ideas about the best way to convince the government representatives that you have solved all of the problems that might come up.

Be sure to consider all of the information that you have found as well as the changes in California since 1849. Remember to include the effects of the mining on the environment in your presentation.

Evaluation

The presentation must include good information to argue its point on the following topics:

- Have the problems of reaching the gold fields been handled well?
- Have provisions been made for miners to purchase mining supplies as well as food and other essentials?
- Are the plans for housing adequate for all of the miners?
- Has careful thought been given to the problem of law and order?
- Has the committee presented ideas for protecting the environment?
- The presentation must show excellence in speaking including good stage presence and proper use of language.

• Reflection

Think about your presentation to the government panel.

- What did you do to get the information you needed?
- What sources were the best? Which were not useful?
- If you were doing this activity again, what would you do differently?

Conclusion

- Which group made the most convincing argument? Why?
- Which group did not present a convincing argument? Why?

Teachers Notes

Grade Level: Grade 4, California: A Changing State

H/SS Standards, Grade 4

4.3 Students explain the economic, social, and political life of California from the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic through the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush and California statehood, in terms of:

1. the location of Mexican settlements in California and other settlements including Ft. Ross and Sutter's Fort

- 3.the effect of the Gold Rush on settlements, daily life, politics, and the physical environment (e.g., biographies of John Sutter...)

4.the immigration and migration to California between 1850 and 1900; its diverse composition, the countries of origin and their relative locations, and the conflicts and accords among diverse groups (e.g., the1882 Exclusion Act)

Lesson Length: about one week

Materials Needed:

- Enough butcher paper or poster board for each group
- Markers or crayons for each group

Interdisciplinary Connections:

Language Arts Standards Grade 4: Reading Comprehension: Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They evaluate new information and hypotheses by testing them against known information and ideas; compare and contrast information on the same topic after reading several passages or articles; distinguish between cause and effect and fact and opinion in expository text.

Writing Strategies: Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. They create a multiple paragraph composition which establishes and supports a central idea; includes supporting paragraphs with simple facts, details, and explanations.

Listening and Speaking Strategies: Students listen and respond critically to oral communication. They speak in a manner that guides and informs the listener's understanding of key ideas.

Resources:

Books and Magazines:

Andrist, Ralph K., The California Gold Rush. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates, 1961.

Blumberg, Rhoda. The Great American Gold Rush. New York: Scholastic, 1989.

Gold. California Cobblestone, 1997

Gold Rush and the Settlement of California. Encylopedia Britannica.

Johnson, Harper and Anita. The Real Book about Gold. Garden City, NY: Garden City Books, 1954.

Martinez, Lionel. Gold Rushes of North America-An Illustrated History. Secaucus, NJ: The Wellfleet Press, 1990.

Place, Marian T. Gold Down Under: The Story of the Australian Gold Rush. Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1969.

The California Gold Rush. New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1961.

Videos:

California's Gold by Huell Howser

Water Under Pressure

California Companies

Early Mining Days - California Gold Country:

Evaluation:

Score the oral presentation by means of a rubic developed by the class. The following elements may be included:

1. Research was complete and related to the point of presentation

2. Used effective visuals or technology

3. Oral delivery
    Persuasive
    Used proper English conventions
    Presentation clear, poised, and audible

4. Reasoning was sound

Adaptations for Special Needs:

Second language students can create supplemental pictures and posters for the presentations, and work with an English speaking student when doing the oral activity.

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